DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 530 UD 024 930

TITLE	Women of Hispanic Origin in the United States Labor Force. Facts on Working Women. Fact Sheet No. 85-11.
INSTITUTION	Department of Labor, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Nov 85
NOTE	5p.; Document printed on colored paper.
PUB TYPE	Reference Materials - General (130)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Demography; Educational Attainment; *Employed Women; *Females; *Hispanic Americans; *Labor Force; *Occupational Information; Unemployment

ABSTRACT

A four-page synposis of data on women of Hispanic origin in the labor force is presented. Data included are numbers of Hispanic women in the labor force; percentage of Hispanics among women in labor force; percentage of Hispanic women in the labor force; median ages; unemployment rate; education level; income levels; types of jobs occupied including percentages in labor jobs versus managerial and professional capacities; percentage of mothers in labor force; percentage of families maintained by women; percentage of families maintained by women below the poverty line; immigration trends; and geographic location. Two tables are included showing employment status of Hispanic women and types of jobs held. (CG)

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Facts on U.S. Working Women

U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau, 1920-1985

ED270530

Fact Sheet No. 85-11
November 1985

WOMEN OF HISPANIC ORIGIN IN THE UNITED STATES LABOR FORCE

- Women of Hispanic origin in the United States, age 16 and over, numbered 5.7 million in 1984. The largest subgroup was women of Mexican origin (3.2 million), followed by women of Puerto Rican (862,000) and Cuban (426,000) origin. The remaining 1.2 million Hispanic women were of Central and South American ancestry or of other Hispanic descent.

- Of the 49.7 million women in the civilian labor force in 1984, 2.8 million, or 5.7 percent, were of Hispanic origin. Of these, 58 percent were of Mexican, 11 percent of Puerto Rican, 8 percent of Cuban, and the remainder (22 percent) of other Hispanic origin.

- Among all Hispanic women, about 50 percent were in the labor force in 1984--somewhat lower than the labor force participation rate for all women (54 percent). This overall rate obscures differences among the various Hispanic ethnic groups, and mainly reflects the rate for women of Mexican origin. Puerto Rican-origin women had the lowest rate at 38 percent, compared with 55 percent for Cuban women and 51 percent for Mexican women.

Table I

Employment Status of Hispanic Women
16 Years of Age and Over in 1984
(Numbers in Thousands)

	All Hispanic Women	Mexican-Origin Women	Puerto Rican-Origin Women	Cuban-Origin Women
Civilian Noninstitutional Population	5,692	3,241	862	426
Civilian Labor Force	2,833	1,640	324	236
Percent of Population	49.8	50.6	37.6	55.4
Employed	2,519	1,459	276	219
Unemployed	314	181	49	16
Unemployment Rate	11.1	11.1	15.0	6.9

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

- Women of Hispanic origin are younger than women in the general population. The median age of Hispanic women in the population in March 1985 was 34.4 years, compared with 40.2 years for all women. Although the median age of Puerto Rican-origin women is similar to that of Mexican women (33.9 and 33 years, respectively), the former group has a substantially lower labor force participation rate than the latter: 37.6 vs. 50.6 percent. Puerto Rican women's labor force participation rate almost parallels that of black female teenagers (35 percent).

- The unemployment rate for Hispanic women, 11.1 percent, decreased during the last decade by almost 2 percentage points. However, it still remains about 3.5 percentage points above that for all women. Cuban women have achieved the most significant reduction in unemployment. In 1976, their jobless rate was almost 1.5 percentage points higher than that for all women; by 1984, the rate had declined to almost 1 percentage point lower than that for all women (7.6 percent) and for all U.S. workers (7.5 percent).

- Although younger Hispanic women, particularly, are narrowing the education gap, Hispanic women have completed fewer years of school than all women. In March 1985, Hispanic women had completed 11.6 years of school, compared with 12.5 years for all women.

- The median years of school completed by Hispanic women in the labor force rose from 12.1 years in 1975 to 12.3 years in March 1985. The median educational attainment of all women in the labor force was 12.8 years in 1985. Although 21 percent of Hispanic women workers have completed only 8 years or less of school, there is a continuing increase in the proportion of those who graduate from high school and those who complete college.

- The 1984 median income of all Hispanic-origin women 15 years of age and over was $5,830, lower than the $6,868 income of all women. Although the 1984 median income of Hispanic women with year-round, full-time jobs ($13,027) was also lower than that of all women ($15,422), Hispanic women in managerial and professional occupations had earnings not significantly different from that of other women--nearly $18,000 in 1983.

- Women of Hispanic origin were employed as operators, fabricators, and laborers and in service and precision, production, craft, and repair occupations to a greater extent than all women workers. Although the large percentage of Hispanic women employed in clerical positions is similar to the situation among all women, their large proportion in operative jobs--dressmakers, assemblers, and machine operators--is strikingly dissimilar to the employment pattern of all women workers.

- Twelve percent of Hispanic women workers were employed in managerial and professional specialty occupations in 1984. However, they are still less likely than all women (22.5 percent) to be employed in those occupations. Women of Cuban origin (20 percent) were more likely than other Hispanic women to be employed in management and the professions. Mexican- and Puerto Rican-origin women were more likely to be in service work.

Table 2

Occupations of Employed Women, by Hispanic Origin, 1984
Percent Distribution

	All Women	Hispanic Women			
		All Hispanic Women	Mexican-Origin Women	Puerto Rican-Origin Women	Cuban-Origin Women
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Managerial and Professional Specialty	22.5	12.0	9.5	13.8	19.6
Technical Sales and Administrative Support	45.6	41.0	40.6	46.7	42.5
Service Occupations	18.7	23.4	24.6	19.6	12.8
Precision, Production, Craft, and Repair	2.4	4.3	4.7	2.2	4.6
Operators, Fabricators, and Laborers	9.6	17.5	17.9	17.4	20.1
Farming, Forestry, and Fishing	1.2	1.7	2.7	-	0.5

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

- Hispanic mothers were less likely to be in the labor force than all mothers. About half (50.6 percent) of Hispanic mothers of children under age 18 were in the labor force in March 1985, compared with 62.1 percent of all mothers. More than two-fifths (42.7 percent) of Hispanic mothers of children under 3 years of age were workers, less than the corresponding figure for all such mothers (49.5 percent).

- Similar to the trend for the rest of the Nation, the percentage of Hispanic families maintained by women moved upward in recent years. By 1983, 23 percent of Hispanic families were maintained by women, a higher percentage than the corresponding figure for non-Hispanic families at 15 percent. Among Hispanic families, the proportion maintained by women was noticeably higher for Puerto Ricans--about 40 percent--than for other Hispanic groups.1/

- In 1985, about 905,000 Hispanic families (some 23 percent) were maintained by women. More than half (53 percent) of these families had incomes in 1984 which placed them below the U.S. poverty level, compared with 35 percent of all families maintained by women.

- Immigrants in the United States, often having limited English language proficiency and lacking job skills transferable to the American labor economy, may be faced with severe cultural adjustments. In 1980, there were 530,635 Hispanic immigrants in the United States, including an influx of new arrivals and persons

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adjusting their status from nonimmigrant to immigrant. In 1979, the latest year available data are disaggregated by sex, there were more women immigrants than men (52,712 vs. 51,218). 2/

- In 1980, most Hispanics in the United States (60 percent) were still concentrated in the five southwestern States of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, but they can be found in smaller concentrations in virtually all States. They were more likely than non-Hispanics to live in central cities. 1/

1/ "Condition of Hispanics in America Today," presented at the hearings of the Subcommittee on Census and Population, House Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, September 13, 1983. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1984.

2/ "In America and in Need: Immigrant, Refugee, and Entrant Women," a project sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau and conducted by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, January 1985.

Note: Hispanic origin refers to persons who identified themselves in the enumeration process as Mexican, Puerto Rican living on the mainland, Cuban, Central or South American, or of other Hispanic origin or descent. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race; thus they are included in both the White and Black population groups.